4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

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Mrs. Bernice Robinson

EVERYBODY LISTENED WHEN ESAU TALKED

554 Esau did not get the kind of recognition he deserved for the work he did.
758 He spearheaded so many things: the Charleston County Citizens' Commit-
74 tee, the Credit Union (and it was countywide, which is very unusual), the
[452] Comprehensive Health Center on Johns Island. He would be really proud if
[734] he was alive today to know that they got the nursing home and the senior
[737] citizens' home. He fought like anything to get the health clinic on the island so they could have medical care for the people over there.

While he was living, he didn't get that much praise. But it didn't daunt
554 his efforts at all. His children suffered a lot for him being so aggressive. They couldn't get jobs in Charleston County. But he still wouldn't let that turn him around. He continued to fight for what he thought was right for his people.

554 Esau didn't finish his high school education until after he'd gotten mar-
191 ried. There were a lot of people, professionals or educators, who felt that if he changed the way he talked, it would be so much better. But I used to say, "Everybody listens when Esau talks in his same Gullah language." He was telling it like it is, and they heard what he was saying. You would think that with the exposure he had, and with him going all around the country, some of it would rub off. I don't think he wanted it to rub off. He maintained his speech as it was. So he had criticism from a lot of the educated folk, but he was saying what they needed to be saying. And he got the benefits for them.

554 He would have a whole lot to say about education. He would be very
871 disappointed about how far we still have to go, but he wouldn't be bitter about it. He would be saying that we haven't accomplished yet what we need to accomplish. And he would see in what way he could work to bring it about.